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Interviewed by: Anon.

Name: Driyü, Phüntso Dorje

Gender: Male

Age: 59

Date of Birth: 1941

Abstract

Phüntso Dorje was an aristocratic government official from the Driyü [Tib. 'bri yul] family which was from Tsang. In this interview, he talks about his education at the Nyarongshar school in Lhasa and in the Tsikhang, and describes studying diu (traditional Tibetan arithmetic). He discusses his work as a Gagpa bodyguard for a Kalön, his position as the Tshasho official in Tanag, and his work as the head of the Lungmar Estate. He also talks about his work paying salaries to the Tibetan road construction laborers and about becoming a member of the Political Consultative Conference after the 1959 revolt. Due to the Panchen Lama incident, Driyü was sent to a reform through labor camp for three years and discusses how he later again became a member of the Political Consultative Conference.

Tape 1

Q: Where is this place located?

A: If we go from Gyantse, we will reach the place called Ralung. In early times, it belonged to Reting, but when they confiscated Reting's property, [it became a government estate]. At first they sent a tsidrung. Nowadays, the place is called Tanag [Tib. rta nag]. It is north from Shigatse.

Q: Which county does it belong to now?

A: Tanag County probably.

Q: There is no Tanag County.

A: There were two places. One is called Shey [Tib. bzhad] and one is called Tanag. In the old society, lots of travelers had to pass this crossroads. Because of this, the government set up an office to collect the salt tax from the traders who were selling salt and wool. The salt tax got more tax income than the wool, so this official was called Tshasho. I was appointed as the Tshasho for a three year term, but I did not do the job. I leased it to another person and I collected three hundred dotse as the lease fee. The person who took this job could make a good income. After collecting the taxes from the salt and wool traders, he had to hand in his collection quota/obligation (to the government), but he still would have a lot of money left over [that he kept].

Q: The tax on salt was the main income, right?

A: Yes it was. There were some taxes from the wool trade, but the income from that was not much. I was appointed as an official to be the Tshasho.

Q: Where did you have to hand in the salt taxes?

A: We had to hand it to the Tsikhang. [Very bad recording.] The Kashag's Gagpa and the tsidrung were not the same. The Kashag's gagpa were the official bodyguards for the Kalön, such as Ngabö and so on. Those Gagpa had to pay some taxes [had obligations]. For example, they had to send horsemen to the annual Mönlam Prayer Festival. However, the Gagpa of the Silön did not have to attend such activities. Moreover, they did not have to go to work every day. You know, the Gagpa of the Kashag had to work every day. The Silön did not have many things to do except attend ceremonies, so the Gagpa also did not have to do a lot. After I served for three years as Gagpa, I was appointed as the Tanag Tshasho.

Q:

A: My hometown was Namling [Tib. nam gling] county. I entered the Tsikhang and then became a lay official because we were hereditary gerpa.

Q: Please give me the specific name of this area.

A: If you ride a horse to go to my place from the county seat of Namling it takes one day. But today it only takes about two hours by car. My homeland was called Gyatso.

Q: Oh, I am going to Namling county Emagang [Tib. e ma sgang] about two weeks from now.

A: If you go to Emagang, you will not reach Namling.

A: My household was called Driyü [Tib. 'bri yul]. In the early times, the minister Seru Gungtön, [Tib. se ru gung ston] (of King Songtsen Gambo [Tib. strong btsan sgam po]) fled (from China). The minister Gar Tongtsen [Tib. mgar stong btsan] was in China and Seru was jealous of Gar Tongtsen and told the Chinese Emperor to keep Gar Tongtsen when the Emperor told them that one minister should remain in China.

Later, Gar tongtsen caught up with him in a place in Kham. After they arrived at the palace of the king in Tibet, the king knew that minister Seru was jealous of Gar and he would probably get punished for it, so Seru fled from the king's palace and resided in the Gyatsotang [Tib. rgya mtsho thang] area permanently. At that time there was no one who knew reading and writing. The members of this household were the only ones who were literate. Every generation of Seru became literate and they came to the Namling area to read Buddhist scriptures. Many people liked to hire them to do ritual activities and they earned a good livelihood from it. Then they slowly became sort of a lord [Tib. dpon po] in that area. Later the local people used to say that the "wanderers from Drigung [Tib. 'bri gung yul 'khyar] were smart to earn their livelihoods and since then, people called this household "Driyü" [Tib. bri yul].

Q: Did you go to any school?

A: Yes. When I was 8 years old I went to the Nyarongshar [Tib. nang rong shag] School that was located at the corner of the big prayer pole (Tib. dongchensur [gdong rtse zur]) in Lhasa. All of the students were very young. There were only about five or six private schools in Lhasa and the Nyarongshar school was the biggest. It had more students and those students were younger than those in the other schools. Sometimes its students would number over 120. I went to this school from when I was eight years old until I was fifteen years old. Then I became a tsidrugpa. In the Iron-Tiger Year [1950] the Dalai Lama took the authority of the Tibetan government in both religion and politics and I became a lay official.

Q: What was your job when you were in the Tsikhang?

A: We were pretty much like students. We were studying handwriting. Before the Tspön came, we had to study mathematics. We learned how to do accounting by diu and there were things like the nine times tables and fractions [Tib. dgu mtha' cha phran], etc.

Q: What do you remember about it?

A: I remember saying the nine times tables.

Q: What is it?

A: It is the formula of the first level table and we had to memorize things such as "nine multiplied by one gets nine" [Tib. dgu gcig gcig la dgu rang yin] and the eight times and so on.

Q: If you learned this formula, where could you use it?

A: It is mathematics and they taught us. After we learned all levels of the formula, when the Tsikhang received the taxes that the dzong and the estates collected from the local households we calculated them when they were handed in to our office. This was called "collected income" [Tib. yong sdud]. It was not useful for daily life, but we used to account for the income that was collected as taxes by the diu system.

Q: Did you see this?

A: No, I did not. I never saw that calculation.

Q: What did you do then?

A: Usually, after one graduated from the Tsikhang, we requested to enter government service [Tib. zhabs sdod]. Nowadays students who studied in the Tsikhang are given the qualification of Secondary Specialized Training School [Ch. zhongzhuan].

Q: When was it?

A: It was given about three years ago. Or maybe it was four years ago.

Q: It is a special policy of the Political Consultative Conference, right?

A: I guess it is a policy of the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Those people who worked or studied in the Tsikhang were given the qualification of Secondary Specialized Training School. However, there were many people who entered

government service before us without being students in the Tsikhang and the Tse labdra, and they did not give them such qualifications. Those people who had worked or studied in the Tsikhang and the Tse labdra were given this qualification. But I needed someone else from the old society to prove my background.

Q: How many of your co-students are living here now?

A: Only a few people who entered government service (then) are living here, but there are some people who had been in the Tsikhang.

Q: Do you know anyone who might remember more about the diu?

A: I think Shatra and Lhalu, who are in the Political Consultative Conference, know about it. Oh! You can ask about it to Kyidu Phüntso Tseden [Tib. skyid sdugs phun tshogs tshe brtan]. When he was in the Tsikhang they were given many different levels of certification. It was different from us. We did not get such certifications. I heard Kyidu and a son of Lukhang [Tib. klu khang] got high certifications.

Q: What is the name of the son of Lukhang?

A: He used to be a kadrung. He was captured (in the revolt) and later was released and went to India because his father and other relatives were there. He died in India.

Q: What else did you do?

A: After I did three years as the Tshasho in Tanag, I was appointed to work on the project that was building a road from Kham to Lhasa. I did not have to stay with the workers, because I was told to manage the salary for the workers. I got the salary from the [Chinese] Military Headquarters of Tibet [Ch. jun qu] in Lhasa. They gave me the dayan and I changed them in the Trapchi Office. I had to change them because if I took the silver coins they would be too heavy to carry from here to the area where the workers were working. In order to decrease the burden of the local people, I changed it (to Tibetan paper money). Otherwise, I would have had to hire lots of animals to move them. I took one-hundred note denominations of paper money. There were many road repairing projects in different places and I went to Kongpo and Dakpo. Some people were sent to Lhoka and some people were sent to Tsang. When the revolt occurred, I was a head of the Lungmar Estate [Tib. lung dmar gzhis sdod]. It was a small area.

Q: Who appointed you to this job?

A: The Dalai Lama appointed me after he took the political power.

Q: Did you take this position?

A: Yes I did.

Q: What did you do there?

A: There were not many things I needed to do. If there were some arguments between the local people, or if they sued each other in the county government, I judged the cases.

Q: What was the difference between the head of Gyantse County and your position?

A: There was a huge difference. Gyantse County was much bigger than us.

Q: Did the estate of Lungmar belong to the government?

A: Yes. It was a government estate. When I was the head of this estate, it was managed by the government and I had to make the accounting to the Shigatse Dzong [Tib. gzhis rtse spyi rdzong]. I handed in our income to it. At that time, we got a salary and could not keep all the income that was generated in our area. It was different from the way they did it before.

Q: What was your rank (in the Tibetan government) [Tib. rim pa]?

A: The head of Lungmar was seventh rank [Tib. rim pa bdun pa]. Basically, when we entered the government service, we were seventh rank.

Q: You were the only official there, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you have any helpers?

A: No I did not. It was a very small estate.

Q: How many people were there?

A: There were about seventy households under this estate.

Q: How much land did you have?

A: It had about 160 or 170 khe of land. Because it was a narrow valley, it did not produce much. I heard that it used to have very good income and that Reting Labrang managed it for a long time. Because at that time there were no motorable roads and the

traders moving wool from Tibet to India had to pass via the Ralung [Tib. ra lung] Village, which was located very close to the Lungmar Estate, the people there used to sell grain, hay and fodder to the traders. However, when I was in this estate, there was no one moving things such as wool by animals, so we did not get any income from it.

Q: What did you do in there? Could you please tell me what did you do from the beginning of the year to the end of the year in your position?

A: We (I) did nothing. Mainly if there was some argument, we judged it. If the government sent an edict, we transmitted it to the local people. That's all. We did not have many things to do.

Q: Did you live on the estate?

A: I lived on the estate [for] about three months. Almost one year after I took this position, the revolt occurred. So I did not get much time to stay there.

Q: If there were some arguments, how did you deal with them?

A: I interrogated both sides when they were suing. Then I wrote down a final verdict. In it, first the argument of the party requesting the case was written on the paper and then the statement of the other side was put down. Then I judged whose statements were correct and informed them of the final verdict.

Q: When the local people brought a case to you, how did you do it? I mean what kind of customs did you have to follow? For example, people might take a khata.

A: There was a customary way to do it. They gave many gifts such as khata, meat, butter, eggs, and some other local products. And some money called the "present for asking help" gyabden.

Q: Did you meet many times about this?

A: No, I did not because our estate was very small. I probably stayed there about five months, and during this time there was only one argument brought before me.

Q: Were there some officials under you in this area? Such as gembo and tsodrag?

A: There was only one gembo in this area and no tsodrag.

Q: Who picked the gembo? Did the local people elect him?

A: Actually, I do not know who elected the gembo. He was the head of village before I came there. I guess it was a position that he inherited from his father.

Q: The taxes were collected according to the size of the lands. The Iron-Tiger Year's Land Enumeration [Tib. lcags stags zhib gzhung] was a list of fields, but this list had been made many years previously and the actual lands had changed some. Did you remeasure fields in your area?

A: No, I absolutely did not. The reason was that before that time, Reting Labrang controlled this estate and after it was confiscated from him, it was managed by government. A tsidrung was sent to manage it. The estate did not have any documents, including a copy of Tiger Year's Land Enumeration. When I took the position, I only got a document that listed the size of fields and people in the area.

Q: How did you collect taxes? As you know when an official collected taxes, he needed a basic tax foundation to collect it.

A: When I was there, the estate belonged to the government, so I made a list of our total income and gave the list to the Shigatse Dzong and they would give me a receipt. I stored the yield in our estate.

Q: Did you have a storehouse?

A: Yes, we had grain storehouses. The main income was grain. We did not have any other income. We stored the grain in our estate and if (the government) sent an order to use it for something, we gave the grain. However, when I was there, I never got such an order.

Q: What kind of taxes did you collect?

A: In Lungmar, the estate had some land and the local people worked for us without payment. We did not even have to give food to them. We continued the way Reting Labrang had managed it. In this area we did not have lands that were leased to the local people for which we were paid in grain. Many other dzong and estates had such lease incomes, but we did not have any income from the leases.

Q: How did you practice collecting the grain tax according to the land? Was it really based on the land or on households?

A: It was according to the land. If one had bigger land holdings, the person should hand in more. In the other county governments and estates there were tregang or magang, and some households had more than two magang, but we did not have households who had even one tregang. The system was different from others because it had been controlled by Reting Labrang. There were only about twenty miser households.

Q: What was the relationship between the Gyantse County government and Lungmar?

A: We did not have any relationship. We were under the Shigatse District.

Q: Could the Gyantse County government order you to do something?

A: No, absolutely not.

Q: It was not like the system of today's county level government and xiang level government, was it?

A: It was different from today. We were under the Shigatse Dzong. We were not subjects of Gyantse.

Q: What happened in the 1959 [revolt]?

A: The revolt arose in March. I was in Gyantse and I returned to my home. I handed in a list of income to the Shigatse Dzong before the New Year. I (left Lungmar and) stayed in Gyantse one night. That night, I played mahjong with Kyidu Tsenden Phüntso [Tib. skyid sbug tshe brtan phun tshogs] of the Kyidu household. Yin Fatang was in Gyantse and he gave us a dinner. Then I went to Shigatse and I did the accounts for them. Finally I returned to my home in Gyatso [Tib. rgya mtso] in Namling County. While I was there, the revolt occurred.

Q: What else?

A: I was in my home in Gyatso. My brother had moved into the courtyard of the TAR. He did not sign his name in Norbulinga and because of this he was considered a progressive [Tib. yar thon] and he got a certificate from the TAR for me and sent it to me. So before the reforms were carried out in my hometown, I already had come to Lhasa. Our old house was located in the front of Taring's [Tib. phreng ring] house and because prisoners lived there, we were given a house called Tshangkyl [Tib. tshang skyid] in Shöl. When I arrived in Lhasa, my brother and his family were living in Shöl and I lived with them. After three or four months, I was sent to the Tibetan Cadres' School [Ch. zang ganxiao] to study.

There was a training class for administrative management [Tib. srid 'dzin 'dzin grwa]. I studied in this school for a year and after I graduated I was sent to the Political Consultative Conference of the TAR. I worked for the Tibetan Political Consultative Conference until 1964. In 1964, the Panchen Lama event happened and I was not happy with it emotionally. As you know, the Panchen Lama was different from the Dalai Lama. He was a progressive all the time but he made problems. I really felt disappointed about it from the bottom of my heart, so I said something reckless at a study session and in other situations. Because of this reason, I was sent to an "education through labor" camp [Tib. ngal rtsol gyi slob gso, Ch. lao jiao] in Sangyib [Tib. gsang yib] in the upper part Trapchi. It was called "laojiao" [Ch. lao jiao] by the Chinese. The party secretary, Lao Zhou, came to send me and he told me in Chinese in the car that, "You are being sent to 'education through labor' camp for three years. When you finish this you can come back to our work unit in the Political Consultative Conference."

My "education through labor" term was finished in 1968, but the Cultural Revolution had begun. So the Political Consultative Conference was kind of dissolved [Tib. 'thor] and (most members of the) Political Consultative Conference were sent to reforms themselves. They were sent to make bricks and ordered to do other kinds of labor. Therefore, I continued to stay in Sangyib [Tib. gsang yibs] until 1969. Then I was sent to the Nyingtri [Tib. nying khri] Lumber Factory [Ch. fa mu chang] in Kongpo with some others. It was also under the Bureau for Reforming Through Labor [Ch. lao gai ju]. I worked there until 1978. Then, we were sent back to Lhasa and I was picked to be in the Political Consultative Conference.

Q: Could you please tell me a little about your family history.

A: I already told you the origin of our family. The origin of our paternal line is related to the Seru Gungtön (of King Songtsen Gambo). This (patrilineal) line has never been broken. I heard that our family usually had lots of sons. Since the fifth Dalai Lama established the Ganden Phodrang Government [Tib. dga' ldan pho brang (i.e., the Tibetan government)], the first member of our family to serve this government was one of our grandfathers during the time of the Seventh Dalai Lama. However, he did not get much education, so even though he registered as a member of the government service, he stayed most of the time in our home in Tsang.

Then a few generations were not able to be members of the government. In short, my father was the fifth who served to the government from our family. However, my brother and I were the only ones who served the government at the same time from one family. When my father was still living, my brother entered the government service and then I entered too. So our original kinship came from Seru Gungtön and the lineage has never been broken. From our family, I guess we only had five people who have entered Tibetan government service.